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**The American Role in Rising
Sectarianism in Iraq in the Post
Invasion Era 2003-2012**

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Declaration

We hereby declare that this thesis entitled, “**The American Role in Rising Sectarianism in Iraq in the Post Invasion Era 2003-2012**”, is our own work, and the entire source we quoted from have been duly acknowledged by means of references.

Signature:

Date:

Dedication

Praise be to *Allah* who has aided us with knowledge, adorned us with patience,
honoured us with piety, and blessed us with well-being.

We dedicate our humble work to:

Our dear *parents*

Our amazing *families*

Our *brothers* and *sisters*

Our *teachers* and *friends*

SAHRAOUI Youssef Islam and **DAHOUM** Ettahir

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To *Allah* belongs all praise and thanks for guiding us to enlightenment, faith, and righteous deeds.

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Abstract

The study dealt with the issue of the impact of sectarianism on the sovereignty of the contemporary Iraqi state, by addressing the various disparate trends in the consideration of the concept of sectarianism, as well as the most important concepts similar to the concept of sectarianism. The focus was on the most important sectarian factors, the causes of which were numerous, such as the sectarian conflict over power in the state, and the external or international role of the American occupation in 2003, taking advantage of the sectarian discrimination to achieve its own interests. Added to this, the Iraqi state witnessed a crisis between its various sects, starting from 2003 until 2012, and this does not negate the existence of some of them before this period, which led to destabilization and hindered the building of the state after its collapse politically, economically and socially. Its reliance on the sectarian quota system did not achieve any kind of democracy. On the contrary, it led to corruption and the spread of bureaucracy. The establishment of the state on national sectarian foundations complicates the issue of national sovereignty in the future.

Keywords: Sectarianism - National Sovereignty - Sectarian Conflict - the Iraqi State – Power.

List of abbreviations

US: the United States

BP: British Petroleum

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency

WMD: Weapons of Mass Destruction

SOFA: the Status of Forces Agreement

OPEC: Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

CPA: the Coalition Provisional Authority

ISIS: the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

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General Introduction

The competition between the Shiites and Sunnis in Iraqi society after the American occupation in 2003 has formed the focus of the political struggle in the Iraqi state. These sectarian tensions and conflicts hindered the state-building processes and destabilized the country. What made things worse was the failure of the successive Iraqi governments to make any clear attempts to overcome these divisions and build a common national identity. Indeed, many of the measures taken so far have only led to further fragmentation of the state.

Historically the differences between the Shiites and Sunnis revolved around the political, theological and ideological issues were the reason for the division between Sunnis and Shiites, however, the competition over power, resources and status is the motive behind its modern manifestations. Gradually, the idea of the sectarian representation dominated the political relations instead of the citizen representation, which exacerbated the existing divisions rather than mitigating them.

The institutionalization of the sectarian identities has led to the outbreak of conflicts and bloody acts of violence over the status, size and strength of each sect. These conflicts and acts of violence have had a destabilizing effect on the security and societal stability, especially when they legitimize the actions of violent groups that claim to represent their sects.

The issue of sectarian violence in Iraq today has taken up a wide range of verbal debates and serious intellectual dialogues, which were addressed by a group of intellectuals, religious scholars and academics, who represented the various segments and affiliations of the society, through which they tried to develop appropriate solutions to this growing phenomenon, which has become a threat to the unity of the country and its future. It explores the possibilities of developing an intellectual and practical system capable of overcoming the state of retrenchment and sectarian alignment, in order to build a unified future national

fabric. The question that is being asked here, after all that has been said and is being said about what is happening in the Iraqi arena:

What is the impact of the sectarian dimension on the stability of the regime in Iraq
after the American occupation?

Which includes a set of partial questions, as follows

1. What are the roots of sectarianism?
2. How does the religious and sectarian pluralism affect the stability of countries?
3. What are the reasons for the American occupation of Iraq in 2003?
4. What are the political transformations that Iraq witnessed under the American occupation in 2003?
5. What are the most prominent expected scenarios for the sectarian situation in Iraq?
6. What is the future of the situation of minorities in Iraq?

Based on the research questions, several objectives has been established in this research, as follows:

1. To find out the sectarian roots in Iraq.
2. To find out the motives of the American occupation of Iraq in 2003 and its procedures.
3. To describe the real reasons behind the sectarian violence today in Iraqi society.
4. To state the most important methods through which the sectarian violence is practiced in the Iraqi society.
5. To identify the problem of building the state in Iraq in the light of the American presence in general.

The importance of the research is due to the fact that the phenomenon of sectarian violence is a serious phenomenon that threatens the security, stability and survival of Iraqi society. Therefore, this phenomenon must be addressed through scientific and academic research with the aim of probing its depths and discovering its hidden causes and the reasons behind it in an attempt to mitigate its severity on society, by striving to build a cross-sectarian intellectual system that gives priority to the homeland over the sect. Contrary to the orientations of the political elite with a sectarian tendency that seeks to control society with its sects, through its endeavour to build a sectarian state and use it to control society. furthermore, the study seeks to cover the aspects of the issue of sectarianism through its impact, especially on the sovereignty of the Iraqi state on the one hand, and to find scientific and practical alternatives to avoid the crisis on the other hand.

Among the reasons that prompted us to choose this topic for study are the following:

1. The fact that the study of this topic is one of the old topics, but it appeared with recent developments through the emergence of several problems related to the conflicting sects among themselves in the Gulf countries in general and in Iraq in particular.
2. Growing talk about the concept of sectarianism in light of the contemporary state that adopts democracy, calls for the promotion of human rights and freedoms, and allows for political pluralism in the state that is characterized by great ethnic and sectarian diversity, such as Iraq.
3. The suffering of the Iraqi people, government and people, from the increasing danger of extremism and violence between the Sunni and Shiite currents, and its development into civil wars that may amount to world wars.
4. Iraq is a vital region in relation to the American security concerns, especially and its reflection on the Middle East region, where there are many American initiatives put forward to it, especially in the recent times. This deserves an understanding of the American security

project in its various arrangements and the initiatives that followed it as the American foreign policies directed at the Middle East region, targeting Iraq.

Determining the methodology used in the study depends on the objective of the research to be reached and the answers that it seeks to collect, the research will adopt the two approaches: the historical and the analytical descriptive, the historical approach in an attempt to trace the historical roots of sectarian violence in Iraq. As for the descriptive and analytical approaches, we will try to describe the crisis of sectarian violence today in Iraq and analyze it to show its most important causes, and the most important methods that are adopted in the practice of this violence.

A number of studies have been reviewed that dealt with topics close to this study, which are related to the American occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the problem of sectarianism. A study by Ahmed in 2005 entitled “the effect of the American military presence over the political system in Iraq”, this study is a master's thesis submitted to the College of Political Science at the University of Baghdad. It aimed at clarifying the issue of the United States of America's occupation of Iraq and the extent of the controversy it raised about the deliberate intentions to exploit the circumstances in order to achieve the set American goals, Which reflected the natural changes in the American strategic thinking, using justifications, one of which is related to the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction, which reality has proven that Iraq does not possess them, and the occupation has led to the collapse of the entire Iraqi state and the occurrence of a power vacuum.

Elzaben has addressed another study in 2006 under the title “The shift of the American foreign policy towards Iraq from a diplomatic action to a military action”. This study is a master's thesis submitted to the Deanship of Graduate Studies at Mu'tah University, and it aimed to shed light on the American foreign policy towards Iraq and the importance of this country, as it pushed this policy to shift from a military work to a diplomatic work. The

study also dealt with the reasons and motives upon which the American occupation of Iraq was based.

Another study by CHEBLI has been collected in 2008 under the title “Security challenges to US foreign policy in the Middle East in the Post-Cold War Period”. This study, which is a master's thesis submitted to the Middle East University, aimed at explaining the Iraqi challenge to get out of the American umbrella. It dealt, through three sections, with several issues related to the second Gulf War of 1991, the Iraqi occupation war of 2003, and the repercussions of the American occupation. The study sought to answer the question related to the nature of the foreign policy adopted by the American administration, which is related to the Iraqi rebellion against American hegemony in the Middle East region. While the hypothesis of the study indicated that there are international parties pushing towards creating creative chaos in Iraq, such as the United States of America, and other active regional parties that seek to continue the deterioration of the situation in it, such as Iran and Israel.

Based on the foregoing, the research will be divided into two main chapters followed by a general introduction and conclusion. The first chapter deals with the concept of sectarianism, its roots, its most important causes and the methods of the sectarian violence. Added to this it tackles the motives behind invading Iraq by the US. Moreover, it tackles the issue of the sectarian groups as a case that can be rooted at the conceptual and theoretical level by presenting some definitions of the term sectarianism and what may be associated with it in terms of concepts and terms and their historical roots in Iraq. and the means and goals through which they seek to influence internally and externally in a way that threatens the stability of states that gives the issue an international dimension. The second section will be devoted to discussing the most prominent implementation of the sectarian division and violence in Iraq. In addition, it discusses the reality of sectarian identities in Iraq before the

US occupation, during and after the US occupation. The conclusion will highlight the most important findings that have been reached.

Chapter one:

Dimensions of the Sectarian

Identities in Iraq

Introduction

In many studies, sectarianism is indicated as a hindrance to progress. However, objectivity necessitates studying the ramifications of sectarianism, understanding its nature first, which is what we will delve into in this paper. This will be accomplished by presenting various meanings of sectarianism, followed by an exposition of its roots.

1. The Concept of Sectarianism and its Roots.

It cannot be definitively stated that sectarianism is solely a political form, given its connections with various peoples and societies in all their religious diversities in terms of doctrinal formulations and religious affiliations. Hence, numerous propositions come to mind. Is it possible for sectarian sentiment to transform into a positive deterrent to the sense of national belonging? Could sectarianism become a pathway to righteous citizenship?

In sociology, religious sectarianism is often associated with discussions of ecclesiastical matters. It refers to a small group distinguished by its individualistic religious beliefs, sometimes including secretive doctrines. Sectarianism is the adherence to a sect as a pathway, doctrine, or theological principle. It represents the force of attachment to a specific religious environment and manifests as fanaticism and rigidity, marked by a tendency to differentiate oneself from others by two phenomena:

- The phenomenon of an overt religious group that is officially recognized and legalized.
- The phenomenon of a covert or hidden religious group, which exists clandestinely as a counterforce against other sectarian powers. (Kadhem Al Shaib,2011, p51-52)

Sectarianism is the affiliation to a specific religious sect that may have separated from a larger religious group. Thus, an individual's affiliation is determined by belonging to a larger group, then a smaller one, and so forth, resembling a pyramid structure. For example, an individual may be an Orthodox Coptic Christian. Religion may constitute the variable

minority within the larger community, and therefore, the minority can be based on racial, linguistic, religious, tribal, or a combination of criteria, depending on the individual and collective identities of its members. (Hassan bin Nawi, 2015, p54)

Sectarianism is associated with religious beliefs, where individuals belong to a specific religious category, making them different from others who belong to different religious categories. Belonging to a religious group may take a hierarchical form, whereby individuals belong to a religious group that is part of a larger group, such as a sect within a denomination. For example, one may be a Shiite Muslim, a Catholic Christian, or a Protestant Christian. (Ouifi Khaira, 2005, p54)

Sectarian Roots

1. The Religious Factor in Non-Islamic Civilizations

We deal with this era through the two main religions, Judaism and Christianity. In **Judaism**, believers split into four sects following disagreements in their faith after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, which Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) had built. These sects are the Karaites, Samaritans, Rabbinic Judaism, and the Rabbinical community, which interprets the Torah according to the Talmud and doesn't strictly adhere to divine texts. Some consider them to be far removed from the true roots of Judaism. The Karaites strictly adhere to the Torah texts and do not recognize those who oppose them. As for the Samaritans, they differ from the other sects and challenge Rabbinic Judaism and the Karaites, particularly regarding their acceptance of the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him), whom they believe was sent to the Arabs, their use of lunar calendars for determining months as Muslims do, their belief that the Torah has not been altered and should still be followed, and their denial of the prophecies of David (peace be upon him) and subsequent prophets after Moses (peace be upon him).

While; **Christianity** divided into three sects, after the emperor converted Constantine converted to Christianity according to the following stages:

A. The first phase, from the spread of Christianity to the emergence of Islam, revolved around the identity of Jesus Christ. Was Jesus God Himself? Did Jesus have a human aspect and a divine aspect? Is Jesus the Son of God? Is the Son Jesus and the Father one in essence? (Hafedh Othman, p 105)

B. The second phase, from the advent of Islam until the Crusades, saw controversies over the means of approaching Jesus Christ concerning images and statues. Was it permissible to approach him through such means or not? This was influenced by Islamic teachings that rejected idolatry and any tangible representations in approaching God.

C. The third phase, from the Crusades to the religious Reformation, was characterized by the formation of religious factions and their conflicts within the followers of Christianity. This occurred after Christians coexisted with Muslims and many became convinced of Islamic beliefs. One outcome of this conflict was the separation of the Greek Orthodox Church from the Catholic Church.

2. The Political Factor in the Islamic Civilization

After the death of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), a major disagreement arose among the companions regarding who should rule. The differences were divided into three directions:

- The first direction believes that the Ansar (the helpers of Medina) are more entitled to the caliphate because they supported and sheltered the Prophet.
- The second direction holds that the Muhajireen (the emigrants from Mecca) have the right to the caliphate based on the Prophet's statements in hadiths that the leaders should be from

the Quraysh tribe. This is also supported by the Prophet's appointment of Abu Bakr as the leader of the Muslims in prayer.

- The third direction emerged after Ali ibn Abi Talib's succession in the Muslim caliphate. They believe that Ali and his family are superior to Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman. Their argument is that Ali and his family, being descendants of Quraysh, are the elite of the elite in terms of status and lineage. They use a famous analogy to support their view, stating that the people of the Prophet's household are like the fruits, while the Quraysh tribe is like the tree, and the fruit is better than the tree. (Hafedh Othman, p 147)

The idea evolved among the Shia to the belief in the infallibility of the Ahl al-Bayt (the family of the Prophet), and that the leadership of the Ahl al-Bayt is a fundamental pillar of Islam that cannot be overlooked or undermined by the Ummah (Muslim community). Consequently, the disagreement here with the Sunni Muslims became more than just a difference in interpreting texts; it evolved into a doctrinal dispute over time. As differences evolved within various religions, each sect began to accuse the other of not understanding the religion correctly. Each sect came to represent a creed that its members believed they had the right to follow. In modern times, Judaism and Christianity have managed to contain internal disagreements within their various sects and denominations. However, in Islam, differences have escalated into conflicts between Shia and Sunni Muslims, lacking a conducive dialogue environment and facing challenges related to minority rights. Historical experiences and current realities demonstrate the impact of these differences on the political stability of states and societies, particularly in modern democracies that prioritize respecting the rights and freedoms of all individuals within society. (ibid)

It is difficult to pinpoint a historical background for Sunni political conflict in general. The concept of Imamate was not originally among the fundamental tenets of all Sunni schools of thought, which are monotheism, prophethood, and the Day of Judgment, as

it is for Shia Muslims. Even the concept of justice was not a fundamental tenet as it is for Shia. The Mu'tazilites, for instance, did recognize the concept of Imamate and justice throughout various caliphates. The distinction between Sunni and Shia along doctrinal lines only emerged after the advent of Ash'ari creed, particularly with the Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari (died 935 CE).

In the third and fourth centuries of the Islamic calendar, differences based on jurisprudence emerged between Shia and Sunni. Many books of Prophetic tradition were written for Sunnis, while Shia had their own books, including the "Seven Books." However, there is no narration indicating that the casualties of the battles of (656 CE) or (657 CE) were buried in the mosque's precincts or at the time of prayer, nor were their hands placed on their chests or made into receptacles. People were known to be supporters of Ali or Muawiyah, Shia of Ali or Shia of Muawiyah. The term "Shia" was a general term meaning followers, denoting a purely political distinction rather than a religious or jurisprudential one. Historians distinguish between the caliph Hasan ibn Ali and the governor of Syria, Muawiyah ibn Abi Sofian, during the "Year of Unity." It is likely that if Muawiyah had complied with the conditions of that agreement, history might have changed. The map of Islamic sects and factions might have undergone a radical change.

2. Backgrounds and Pretexts for the US Invasion of Iraq.

2.1. Backgrounds of the American invasion of Iraq

The justifications presented by the American administration regarding the invasion of Iraq have faced widespread criticism, ranging from the American public to the global community and many dissenting voices. These criticisms highlight the perceived double standards of American policy and indicate scepticism towards the stated reasons, such as the threat of Saddam Hussein's regime or attempts to bring about reform in the region.

Ultimately, these justifications are seen as reflecting underlying American intentions that can be summarized in:

A. Petroleum: In 1999, Dick Cheney, when he was the CEO of Halliburton, stated that the United States would need an additional 50 million barrels of oil every day. Where would they get that oil from?

It has also been stated that "if there are regions in the world that offer exceptional opportunities in the field of oil, the Middle East, which holds a third of the world's oil reserves at reasonable cost, is the right place where we will find the largest share of our needs." In June 2001, just two weeks after President Bush Jr. took office, his Vice President, Dick Cheney, held secret meetings regarding energy, without disclosing its objectives or participants. These meetings were shrouded in complete secrecy to the extent that a Washington Post journalist described it as a "secret organization." However, on July 17, 2003, a Federal Appeals Court ruled for the disclosure of Cheney's documents, among which was a map of Iraq dated March 2001. The map divided almost a third of the country into exploration blocks, including those shared with Saudi Arabia, implying that the intention for the occupation of Iraq had been harboured since that time, regardless of the events of September 11. (Mohammad Al-Arabi bin Azouz, 2009, p22)

The United Kingdom is one of the most important allies of the United States in the quest for dominance over energy sources. There is significant mutual interest between the petroleum industries of the United States and the United Kingdom, embodied by giant petroleum companies such as British Petroleum (BP). This is a fundamental reason for the strong alliance between these two powers, in addition to the integration that has occurred between them since 1999 in the military industry, notably with projects like the "Transatlantic Crossing Tanker". Considering that Iraq hosts 11% of the world's oil reserves after Saudi Arabia, as pointed out by Michael Renner in his article "Oil and Blood: The Way

to Take Over the World," it is evident that the pretext of liberating Iraq and the world from Saddam Hussein's regime is merely a façade for the underlying economic interests based on energy.(ibid)

According to analyst Anthony Cordesman in The Washington Times, in its first issue of August 2002, he stated: "America will not wage war on Iraq under the pretext of possessing weapons of mass destruction or its involvement in terrorist operations, but rather because Iraq possesses 60% of the world's oil surplus." (Samir Sarem, 2003, p82)

B. Israel's security: Israel has become, in American strategic thinking, an advanced American military base in the Arab world. It can be used for striking oil wells in emergency situations and as a launching pad for destroying industrial areas in the former Soviet Union. It serves as a bridge connecting the African and Asian regions and as a local force to discipline Arab regimes that reject American hegemony, particularly Iraq. It also serves as a military tool to confront Arab liberation movements and to prevent them from achieving their unity goals. Additionally, it is a political tool to ignite ethnic and sectarian conflicts in Arab countries. As the only state in the region representing Western values, Israel is seen as the only democratic model representing progress and development that Arab countries themselves need. Therefore, Iraq's opposition to Israel's presence in the region was one of the reasons for the American invasion of Iraq. Consequently, Israel's security is considered part of American national security. (Ammar bin Sultan, 2012, p20-21)

C. Religious background: It is important to distinguish between the neoconservative group, represented by figures such as Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Douglas Feith, Lewis Feith, Elliott Abrams, and William Kristol, and the group including Robert Kagan, Charles Krauthammer, and Joshua Muravchik. While the latter may share some similarities in their ideologies, they are not classified within the neoconservative camp but rather as a group called the "Aggressive Nationalists." This group includes former Vice President Dick Cheney

and Defence Secretary Rumsfeld. The key difference lies in their objectives: while neoconservatives aim to reshape the world according to American vision, the second group seeks to utilize American power to intimidate competing nations and crush potential threats to American security. However, both groups share a tendency to monopolize international institutions and promote pre-emptive actions.

The dominant religious influence within the neoconservative administration played a significant role. While religion was deeply rooted in the policies of the Bush administration, with strong convictions from evangelical beliefs, there was a distinction between the Christian Right and the neoconservatives, who viewed religion more as a political tool. However, it is evident that American policy during the Bush administration was built upon evangelical and neoconservative ideologies, fuelled by the presence of figures like George W. Bush with his evangelical inclinations. The events of September 11 further propelled and justified their agenda. (Amin Shabeli, 2005, p120-121)

2.2. Pretexts for the US invasion of Iraq:

The justifications for the invasion of Iraq, as stated by American decision-makers, can be summarized as follows:

A. Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction: President Bush presented the CIA's argument more extensively in his State of the Union address on January 28, 2003: "Saddam Hussein possesses biological weapons capable of killing millions, and chemical weapons to exterminate countless thousands, along with mobile biological laboratories designed to produce deadly germ warfare agents. He also added that Saddam Hussein recently sought to purchase large quantities of uranium from Africa, and our intelligence sources have informed us that he attempted to acquire aluminium tubes suitable for producing nuclear weapons."

On the eve of war on February 5, 2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell, unparalleled in international stature within the Bush administration, went to the United Nations saying: "Everything you have heard today is backed by solid sources; these are not allegations. What we are presenting to you are facts and conclusions based on robust intelligence." Powell reiterated, "There is no doubt that Saddam Hussein possesses biological weapons, and he has the capability to deliver these deadly toxins and diseases in a manner that can cause serious death and destruction." He further warned of the existence of mobile Iraqi biological weapons laboratories, how they could remain hidden in the shadows and produce their poisons undetected. Additionally, he stated that Saddam Hussein possesses enough chemical weapon systems to fill 16,000 battlefield rockets, and perhaps the most dangerous of all is the threat of "a more ominous nexus between Iraq and the terrorist network of al-Qaeda." (Tim Waynes, 2010, p650-651)

In addition to that, the American administration, both before and during the American invasion of Iraq, confirmed that one of the main reasons for the United States' invasion of Iraq was Saddam Hussein's possession of weapons of mass destruction. The Bush administration, particularly Defence Secretary Donald Henry Rumsfeld, claimed to have knowledge of the quantities, types, and locations of these weapons. In his address on March 17, 2003, where he gave Saddam Hussein a 48-hour ultimatum to step down, President Bush stated: "The intelligence gathered by our government and other intelligence agencies leaves no room for doubt that the Iraqi regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal types of weapons ever devised.

The United States, where it began to affirm that the CIA had compiled a list of 942 sites where weapons of mass destruction belonging to Saddam Hussein could be found. Under the leadership of James Tenet, the agency produced a highly classified national intelligence report titled "Continuing Programs of Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq."

The top-secret report stated that "Baghdad possesses chemical and biological weapons," and Saddam had enhanced his missile technology, greatly increased his deadly stockpiles, and resumed his nuclear programs. The report also warned that "if Baghdad were to acquire sufficient fissile material from abroad, it could build a nuclear weapon within a year." Additionally, the CIA warned that Iraq could launch chemical and biological attacks within the United States. (Tim Waynes, 2010, p 646)

B. Saddam Hussein's regime: The events of September 11, 2001, provided a new opportunity for the neoconservatives to reaffirm their security concepts and particularly to push for action against Iraq in the context of combating terrorism, which they viewed as the primary enemy of the United States. Just as they formulated the concept of the "Evil Empire" during the Reagan era, they also coined the term "Axis of Evil" during the Bush administration. Their mantra became "if you're not with us, you're with the terrorists." (Amin Shabeli, 2005, p120)

Bernard Lewis considered Iraq to be the perfect place to provide a decisive response, as he saw it as the beating heart of the enemy's power. He believed that the West should impose order and Western-style democracy from above, drawing inspiration from the Atatürkian experience in Turkey. According to this perspective, the Iraqi regime would then become a democratic and modern beacon, central to American security strategy and a model for the rest of the Middle Eastern countries. This is a narrative that emerged in March 2003 from leaks by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the media, indicating that George W. Bush enthusiastically declared that a new regime in Iraq would be a shining example of freedom and a source of inspiration for the rest of the nations in the region. This was based on the theory of the domino effect, which was not necessarily endorsed by the conservative military, under which authoritarian regimes (such as Saddam Hussein's regime) would fall one after

the other, with the Iraqi model evolving after the victory and under continuous pressure from the United States. . (Mohammad Al-Arabi bin Azouz, 2009, p113)

According to Condoleezza Rice, the National Security Advisor, George W. Bush made it clear that Saddam Hussein was a problem before September 11, 2001, and that he remained a very bad regime, asserting that the world would be better off and more secure without him. The United States used the argument of Saddam Hussein's regime and its connection to terrorism as a justification for its hostility towards Saddam himself. This connection between Saddam's persona and terrorism emerged against the backdrop of political and cultural changes within the Iraqi leadership after the Gulf War, particularly through its utilization of religious rhetoric and significant financial support for Salafi ideology.

Another reason for American animosity towards Saddam Hussein was the claim by the US administration of the former Iraqi leadership's involvement in the attempted assassination of George H.W. Bush in Kuwait and the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. The US administration also cited Iraq's non-compliance with UN resolutions regarding allowing weapons inspection teams to operate in Iraq and its continued manufacturing and possession of weapons of mass destruction, as well as Saddam's dictatorship and his alleged connection to Osama bin Laden, the primary suspect in the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Despite efforts, the report issued by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on July 29, 2004, stated that "after a thorough review, the committee did not find any tangible evidence of a connection between Saddam Hussein and the al-Qaeda organization." In September 2005, Colin Powell also refuted any relationship between the two parties. (Saleh Yasser, 2013, website)

C. Spreading democratic ideas: Following the events of September 11, 2001, and at the beginning of preparations for the American campaign in Iraq, President Bush inundated the media with elaborate rhetoric, portraying his war on Iraq as nothing less than a liberation of the people from the tyranny of a dictator. He coined the term "Freedom for Iraq," and emphasized that the United States was liberating a foreign land and unleashing the freedom of 25 million Iraqis. This messaging aimed to sway public opinion both domestically and internationally, with the American citizenry believing in their country's message of carrying the torch of freedom and democracy.

In July 2003, Bush further asserted that given the operations underway in Iraq by the United States, people would come to recognize that the words "liberty" and "America" were synonymous.

Therefore, due to this continuous glorification of "liberty," Iraq came to be seen through a halo of sanctity, at least in the minds of tens of millions of Americans. Consequently, America bears the responsibility of upholding justice, equality, and guiding these sentiments towards development, while also preventing the violence perpetrated by terrorists and rogue states.

Washington chose to include references to the existence of democratic seeds in the Middle East in the broader project. These seeds became evident through the experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq. This was seen as both a challenge and a unique opportunity for the international community to contribute to the implementation of democratic reforms. (Malika Kadri, 2009, p161-162)

3. The Sectarian Identities in Iraq.

Iraq is home to various religious communities, including Muslims, Christians, and other minority groups. The majority of Iraqis are Shia Muslims following the Twelver Shia doctrine, while Sunni Muslims adhere to either the Shafi'i or Hanafi schools of thought, with

a smaller number following the Hanbali School. The Christian community in Iraq consists of Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Protestants, with smaller numbers of Copts, Assyrians, Armenians, and Jews. Additionally, there are followers of the Baha'i faith. The estimated population in the twentieth century was around 23 million. (Hassan bin Nawi, 2015, p92)

The Kurds make up around 20% of the total population of Iraq. Kurds are a distinct ethnic group characterized by geographical, ethnic, and religious factors. However, their unity has been fragmented by historical divisions and international interests, leading to their dispersion across five countries: Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Armenia. Except for Armenia, where the Kurdish presence is relatively independent and does not pose a significant problem, Kurdish presence in the other four countries constitutes a major issue. Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and to some extent Syria have struggled to find political mechanisms to accommodate the Kurds. This issue has transformed into armed conflict, affecting these countries and prompting various approaches to dealing with the Kurds, ranging from outright discrimination, as seen in Turkey and Iran, to granting a degree of autonomy, as in Iraq.

The Iraqi Shia in the south represent approximately 55% of the total population of Iraq, and most of them are Arabs. The term "Shia" is used to describe anyone who belongs to the Ja'fari school of thought, either by birth or by choice. Therefore, Shia Muslims are not an ethnic or nationalist group but rather represent a diverse range of social segments that adhere to specific religious and intellectual ideologies. (Hadjar Khatal, 2011, p34)

The emergence of the Kharijites was closely associated with the emergence of the Shia. Both groups appeared as factions during the era of Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, and they were initially among his supporters. However, the concept of the Shia preceded the concept of the Kharijites.

The Kharijites appeared within Ali's army during the Battle of Saffin, when the conflict intensified between Ali and Muawiyah. Muawiyah became weary of the ongoing

fighting and sought arbitration. He raised copies of the Quran, suggesting that they should resort to its judgment. However, Ali insisted on continuing the battle until Allah decided between them. At this point, a group from Ali's army, the Kharijites, left and urged him to accept arbitration. Reluctantly, Ali agreed, and they settled on two arbitrators, one chosen by Ali and the other by Muawiyah. Muawiyah chose Amer ibn al-Aas, and Ali intended to choose Abdullah ibn Abbas. However, the Kharijites pressured him to select Abu Musa al-Ashari. The arbitration eventually resulted in the removal of Ali and the confirmation of Muawiyah's rule.

The Kharijites later deemed the arbitration a grave sin and demanded that Ali repent for his involvement, accusing him of committing disbelief by accepting arbitration. They repented and were followed by others from the Bedouin tribes. Their slogan became "No rule but Allah's." They began fighting against Ali, whom they once supported, and accused him of deviating from the right path.

The majority of Iraqi Shia come from various ethnic backgrounds. Despite representing more than half of Iraq's population, they are considered a minority in terms of access to power within the Iraqi government, and they are largely excluded from high-ranking positions.

Shia communities have been less prone to rebellion against the central government due to their participation in the Arabization policy, which integrates them into the broader social fabric of Iraq. Additionally, their demographic location in the marshlands region does not encourage separatism. Therefore, any encouragement of separatism by Iran would pose a burden on Iran in the future.

It is worth noting that former President Saddam Hussein noticed that Sunni immigrants and Iranians within Iraqi society were threatening the demographic balance in favour of the Shia community, supported by the neighbouring country Iran. Consequently,

the Iraqi president took measures to counteract this sectarian imbalance by halting the granting of Iraqi citizenship to Shia Iranians and deporting some of them to Iran. He also worked on naturalizing many immigrants from Arab countries in Iraq, especially from Egypt, Sudan, and Morocco, granting them Iraqi citizenship.

Shiites constitute 65% of Iraq's diverse population, which includes Kurds, Turkmen, Arab Christians, and Iranians in the northeast, especially in Jal Singar and Sheikhhan areas, making up 18% of the population. Iranians represent 1.5% of the population, while Turkmen, predominantly Sunni Hanafis, make up 2% and are concentrated in the city of Kirkuk and the town of Tal Afar. Arab Christians (Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic) constitute a small minority, while non-Arab Christians (Assyrians, Syriacs) make up 3% of the population. There are also the Mandeans (followers of John the Baptist), most of whom live along the riverbanks and in southern Iraq, constituting less than 1% of the population. Kurds make up approximately 20% of the population, while Armenians (all Christians) constitute a small minority. Finally, there are the Jews, the oldest diaspora, most of whom have migrated, making up a tiny minority.

The diverse ethnic, religious, and linguistic distribution in countries like Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and others has enriched social, economic, and cultural life in the region. However, politically, this diversity has not always been conducive to stability. Many local and regional developments have turned this diversity into a source of political turmoil, sometimes escalating into armed conflicts. The geographical distribution of these groups, coupled with foreign interventions and economic conditions, has contributed to making this region less cohesive and cohesive, resulting in weakened existing political entities. (Hassan bin Nawi, 2015, p96-97).

3.1. The Reality of the Political and Social Identities before the American Occupation of Iraq.

The roots of sectarianism in Iraq trace back to the historical legacy inherited by the country from previous eras. It did not originate in the modern or subsequent nationalist eras, but rather is an inheritance dating back to the periods of Seljuk and Safavid rule. During these periods, Iraq was a theater for conflicts among the Seljuks, Turks, Buwayhids, Persians, and others, who persecuted all Islamic factions that differed from their religious and ideological beliefs. This approach continued even after the rule of the Ottoman Empire in Iraq. In addition to internal factors and the sedimentation of sectarian thought in Iraqi society during the aforementioned historical periods, British colonialism played a significant role in reproducing sectarian conflict. This was achieved by disrupting the social structures of Iraqi society and stoking horizontal conflicts to evade resistance, especially from the Shia, who were known for their resistance to foreign presence on Iraqi soil. During the monarchy period, despite the emergence of a modern state marked by nationalist tendencies, there were indications of the formation of political and social elites that led the country towards unity and stability. They participated in raising awareness and building social, cultural, and political institutions. However, this problematic issue (sectarian conflict) was inherited, especially after the death of King Faisal I (1933-1921 AD) and the succession of his son Ghazi (1939-1933 AD), known for his nationalist ambitions and long-term aspirations. He formed political groups characterized by nationalist and sectarian tendencies, which led to the loss of his power and the explosion of contradictions contained during his father's reign.

In addition to his distinguished relations with Britain, which always sought to empower all attempts to build the nascent institutional structure of the Iraqi state by fueling ethnic and sectarian divides, this was evident in the coercive legal measures taken by Nuri al-

Said's government. These measures sowed the seeds of their origin in the newly formed civil society organizations. After tribal sheikhs became involved in political battles, corrupted the judiciary, deepened class disparities, and monopolized power through the assistance of Nuri al-Said's associates, tribal sheikhs, and city elites, freedoms were suppressed and the voices of national opposition were stifled as they began to evolve and grow, posing a threat to the regime. These included the Assyrian uprising in 1933, the tribes of the Middle Euphrates in 1935, Bakr Sidqi's coup in 1936, the Kanun uprising in 1948, and the uprising in 1952, in addition to the movements of the Bazranis.

The issue of preventing Sunni Muslims in Iraq from leading it presently and in the future is the central issue in the plan of the American-British-Zionist occupation, considering it the ideological, strategic, and political enemy of the occupying forces and the powers cooperating with them. This includes both Shiite organizations and Kurdish organizations dominated by nationalist and ethnic Kurdish bias. Sunni Muslims in Iraq represent the only force capable of resisting and defeating the occupation, achieving independence on all levels, preserving resources, and unifying Iraq on Islamic principles to end the sectarian Kurdish state and confront the escalating Shiite state in the region. This would reconnect Iraq with its Islamic nation on solid foundations for building that nation.

It can also be said that the central issue for the occupation and its role currently, in terms of the preparations made for the aggression on Iraq, aimed to reshape Iraqi society and the state based on the dominance of other forces, currents, and components within Iraqi society over the role and status of Sunni Muslims in Iraq. This was done to change Iraq's identity and separate it from the body of the Islamic nation, regardless of the false claims and interpretations about the nature of Saddam Hussein's regime, which was essentially a development of the systems that governed Iraq after the end of the Islamic rule. During the Sunni rule and within the context of the ongoing process that began in the 18th century, after

Sunni control effectively ended in this century specifically, the Iraqi state was established differently under the direct control and leadership of colonial powers, through intellectual proxies, even if interests sometimes conflicted.

The Sunni Arabs, in particular, have been the force that has been growing within them within the broader Islamic context - a state of Islamic resurgence. Since they were the force that was penetrated, similar to the Kurdish Sunnis who are currently under the influence of a fanatical ethnic state, Western and Zionist strategic efforts have been deployed for a long time. If we add to that the emerging Islamic forces within them, which have succeeded in penetrating the fanatical Kurdish state and developing it into an Islamic state, represented by groups like Ansar al-Islam, it warns of the danger posed by the Kurdish fanaticism and the potential for a strategic shift in Iraq and the region.(Al-Bayan Magazine,p143-144).

We have found that the issue of the Sunni Arabs, in particular, is the main and pivotal issue around which events, developments, manoeuvres, proposals, statements, actions, and analyses revolve. This includes interpretations of motives, activities, roles, and objectives of the Iraqi resistance, as presented by all circles of occupation and the collaborating forces within Iraq. This is because the strategic significance of all the issues raised before and after the occupation of Iraq is essentially about preventing the Sunni Arabs from leading Iraq again after two centuries since the end of the unified Islamic state. This prevention could take the form of changing the identity of the Iraqi society and state to be controlled by Shia, Kurds, and Sunnis, or through the division of the Iraqi state into three countries. All of these are fixed or related issues to a doctrinal, historical, strategic, and political vision regarding Western control over Iraq's governance for historical decades, or about preventing them from leading Iraq in the present or future, considering them as a minority.

The issues raised before the occupation were related to the situation of the Shia under the practices of the former regime towards them, including assassinations, deportations, suppression, and persecution as a religious group, with this regime falsely representing the Arab Sunnis. The other aspect of these issues was the Kurdish ethnic situation, as they were considered a persecuted ethnic minority by this regime. The summary of all this is the necessity to change the balance of relations within Iraqi society and the state at the expense of Arab Sunni control over the state and Iraqi society.(ibid)

Through tracking the developments in Iraq, the extent of the Shiite-Kurdish convergence in the country becomes evident. The First Gulf War witnessed an unlikely alliance between Shiite Iran and both the Kurdish Democratic Party led by Massoud Barzani in 1983 and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan led by Jalal Talabani in 1994. This alliance reflected on the relationship between the Kurds and the Shiite in Iraq as allies of Iran. Additionally, the animosity towards President Saddam Hussein and the Baath Party by both the Shiites and the Kurds approached mutual agreement. All parties opposed to President Saddam Hussein agreed on the necessity of overthrowing his rule, especially after the intervention of the United States and Britain for the same purpose.

After the occupation of Iraq and the drafting of the Iraqi constitution, establishing the principle of federalism, deep divisions emerged between the regional government in Erbil and the central government in Baghdad, particularly regarding disputed areas or what is known as the "disputed territories" according to the Kurdish description, with Kirkuk, the oil-rich city, at the forefront. Significant disagreements arose over the interpretation of Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution, which addresses these territories. Recently, tensions escalated with the government of Nouri al-Maliki, who is Shiite, when the latter formed the Tigris Operations Command. The Kurds considered this as an encroachment on the powers of the

Kurdistan Region and the Peshmerga forces, leading to the brink of armed confrontation between the two sides. (Mohammed Khaled Sarhan Abu Al-Rish, 2011, p110-111)

The American occupation of Iraq on April 9, 2003 marked a significant phase in the Arab region as a whole, and particularly in Iraq. Iraq entered a new era with all its implications and details. Some aspects were positive, such as the change of the previous regime and the establishment of a new democratic system. However, there were also negative aspects characterized by sectarianism, violence, terrorism, and the occupation of the country by foreign forces.

3.2. The Reality of the Political and Social Identities during the American Occupation of Iraq.

Many tasks were assigned to the Kurdish side, represented by its armed forces known as the Peshmerga, to assist the American forces during the war on Iraq in March 2003. The American airstrikes targeted Iraqi military sites and destroyed several important military facilities before the ground invasion towards Iraqi territories, which witnessed fierce conflicts, especially in the south, where the Iraqi city of Umm Qasr served as the gateway for the ground invasion of Iraq. In northern Iraq, a group of US Special Forces parachuted into the region because the Turkish parliament did not allow the use of Turkish territory to enter Iraq. These Special Forces, supported by the US Air Force and aided by Kurdish parties' intelligence, played a significant role. It is worth mentioning that the United States designated the Kurdish role in northern Iraq to secure the advancing American forces from the north, secure oil fields and refineries in northern Iraq, and target the locations of the Supporters of Islam group.

In addition, The Kurdish forces secured various military operations during the invasion of Iraq, including the US airborne assault to seize the Harir airfield on March 26th,

as part of the broader attack on Iraqi forces. They also besieged the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul in cooperation with US occupying forces on March 30th. As military operations progressed, especially after the fall of Baghdad, Kurdish forces entered Kirkuk on April 10th without facing any resistance. Additionally, a Kurdish-American agreement was announced in Mosul, resulting in the surrender of Iraqi forces and the handover of their weapons to Kurdish-American forces. The US forces were keen on eliminating any scattered Islamic presence in Iraq, especially in the predominantly Kurdish north. This included addressing the ongoing dispute between Kurdish parties and the Supporters of Islam group, which had a Salafi-jihadist orientation and was sympathetic to al-Qaeda. The Kurdish parties also capitalized on the region's turmoil and US intervention.

After the conclusion of military operations in Iraq, the Kurds sought to develop their political entity by engaging in the political process in the country. They were present in legislative matters and actively participated in the political arena. They were part of the second administrative body in the country, the Transitional Administrative Council, following the first body, the Unified Coalition Authority led by Paul Bremer, after July 2003. Sergio Vieira de Mello, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq, welcomed the formation of the Iraqi Transitional Governing Council. During their first meeting, de Mello informed the council members that Secretary-General Kofi Annan was closely monitoring the developments in Iraq, emphasizing that the United Nations was committed to assisting the council and the Iraqi people through all possible means.(Mohammed Khaled Sarhan Abu Al-Rish,2011, p114-115)

The American and Kurdish interests converged in the shared desire to end the rule of President Saddam Hussein. The issue represented an unavoidable necessity for both the American administration and the Kurdish opposition. The downfall of Saddam's regime was seen as a future for the Iraqi opposition, especially the Shiites in the south and the Kurds in

the north. The Kurds participated actively in the London Conference in 2002, which laid the foundations for post-Saddam Iraq. Additionally, the Kurdish Peshmerga forces played an active role in the events of the 2003 war. They also pursued members of the Ba'ath Party who went into hiding after the fall of Baghdad, arresting several individuals like Taha Yassin Ramadan and handing them over to American forces. This action opened the doors to conflict between the Kurds and their political opponents in Iraq, fuelling sectarian strife in the country. However, the Kurds saw their collaboration with the Americans as an opportunity to secure a homeland in Iraq, a goal they achieved when Jalal Talabani assumed the presidency in Baghdad.

The Kurdish-Iraqi relations deteriorated due to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and its refusal to withdraw. United Nations Security Council resolutions called for Iraq's withdrawal and the establishment of a no-fly zone over Iraq. This led to the formation of a Kurdish entity in the north, enjoying more freedom and independence under the protection of Britain and the United States. (Mohammed Khaled Sarhan Abu Al-Rish, 2011, p110)

Regardless of the common depiction in media and Western analyses that the Iraqi resistance to occupation is an attempt by Arab Sunnis to regain control over the state and Iraqi society, resistance, by its very nature, comes within the context of rebuilding a unified Muslim Iraq in the face of schemes of fragmentation, Westernization, secularization, and Shiaization, etc. Sunni Arabs, linked by their creed, are concerned, like their Kurdish counterparts, with confronting the conspiracy of ethnic dominance over true faith and Islamic identity. They resist just as their Sunni Arab brethren do.

The issue of Sunnis in Iraq, with all their ethnic affiliations, is indeed the core issue in what has happened and is happening in Iraq. This is because the previous regime represented them, and because the resistance is a reaction to the marginalization of Arab

Sunnis. However, the real and current challenge targets changing the identity of Islamic Iraq and building an Iraqi authority based on excluding and combating Sunnis, who are the essence of building and establishing Islamic Iraq for decades, including Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen.

This targeting represents a new phase that complements what has happened since the beginning of the eighteenth century until the establishment of the previous Ba'ath regime, considering Sunnis as the ideological, strategic, and political enemy of the occupying forces and their countries. They are seen as the qualified force to end the penetration that occurred in the Kurdish situation, upon which the occupation relied in implementing its plans with the Shia.

Moreover, they, along with their surroundings in the Islamic world, represent the main obstacle to the occupation's implementation of all its plans, which is why the aggression took place in the entire region. Therefore, addressing the issue of Sunnis and the challenges they currently face in Iraq means precisely addressing all aspects of the occupation's project in its ideological, strategic, and political dimensions, and how to confront it. It also means addressing the Arab and Islamic dimensions of this Western and Zionist strategy and presenting an alternative Islamic strategy or confrontation.

America tries not to appear as an occupier and makes efforts, according to security standards, to present itself as a liberator rather than an occupier. It needs to show the world that it is not a colonial or imperialist state, especially since Iraq did not prove to possess weapons of mass destruction. It aims to generate a spirit of resistance among the Iraqi people to prevent American and Iraqi losses simultaneously. America certainly seeks to maintain the victories achieved so far and avoids getting involved in a guerrilla war that could turn against it and lead to defeat in the face of nations wishing to witness America's downfall. America

aims to remain in Iraq for the required time to secure its oil interests completely and establish a political system under its control, ensuring its interests similar to most Arab regimes. This requires a long time, a large military force capable of deployment in various Iraqi population centers, and the promotion of political leaders at the expense of others, whether they come with the invading forces or are already present in Iraq.

This is a test that carries within it elements that work against it.

The presence of US forces in Iraqi population centers generates awareness of and deepens the perception of occupation over time. America is fully aware that awareness is the first step towards revolution or resistance. Additionally, its support for political elements generates popular, partisan, and religious reactions against these elements. It is highly likely that Iraqis will not tolerate for long those who collaborate with or appease the American side among political or religious leaders. They may quickly turn against them, as happened in some Iraqi cities. Therefore, the intensified presence of US forces amounts to a direct invitation for Iraqis to take up arms and fight for liberation. (Al-Bayan Magazine, p, 295).

The second Republican era from 1963 to 1988 did not differ from previous stages in terms of the escalation of sectarian conflicts in Iraq. Amidst the difficult conditions facing the country on various levels, Abdel Salam Aref, known for his nationalist and sectarian conflicts for political power in the name of liberation and socialism (Ba'athism), carried out the liquidation of most of his opponents, especially communist politicians. In the same context, the Socialist Ba'ath Party resorted to playing on the strings of sectarian conflicts and fueling them to succeed in the horizontal conflicts between the political and social components of Iraqi society and to exclude its adversaries. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that Hana Batat and others stated that on the day of the coup on February 8, 1963, 62% of the Ba'ath

Party leadership in Aref were Shiites. This percentage decreased to 6% in their coup in 1968, indicating that sectarian conflict was at its peak within the Ba'ath Party.

The sectarianism reached an unprecedented level after the second Ba'athist takeover in the coup of July 17-30, 1968, especially during Saddam Hussein's rule. Despite the Ba'ath Party being a nationalist, unitary, and secular party, with its constitution emphasizing secularism and denouncing sectarianism, most of its cadres in the 1950s and early 1960s were nine. However, after the November 18 Movement in 1963 led by Abdel Salam Aref, sectarian tendencies began to emerge within the Ba'ath Party. When they assumed power for the second time in 1968, the process of eliminating Shiite cadres in the party leadership began, either through political assassinations or executions on charges of conspiring against the party and the state, ultimately leading to the monopoly of the party's leadership by the Tikriti clan and Saddam Hussein's family.

3.3. The Reality of the Political and Social identities after the American Occupation of Iraq.

The United States of America has been among the countries that experienced significant tension, instability, and disruption in most of its relations with Iraq since the early stages of the establishment of the modern Iraqi state in 1921. These relations have seldom been friendly and have remained limited. However, at no point in time have they established political, military, or strategic relations with Iraq.

In the context of these turbulent relations and the back-and-forth between the two countries, the United States of America began preparing for the invasion of Iraq, laying down a strategy based on a set of principles aimed at facilitating the destabilization of the Iraqi state and society to pave the way for the occupation of Iraqi territory. This strategy was launched

by the American and British military machinery in 2003. Among these strategic principles were:

- Internationalizing the crisis, which was initially created by the United States, and creating pretexts such as dictatorship and allegations of war crimes against humanity and weapons of mass destruction.
- Cementing military and intelligence control over Iraqi territory.
- Mobilizing American and friendly media outlets to manipulate international public opinion.

Immediately after the American invasion of Iraq, the sectarian dimension of political practice emerged prominently. Discussions about the Iraqi people as a whole dwindled, and instead, the focus shifted exclusively to Sunni and Shia, Turkmen and Kurds. This trend was further solidified by the establishment of the first interim governing council, initiated by the American envoy, Paul Bremer, to provide political participation. Since its inception, this council made numerous radical political and economic decisions, lacking political or legal cover but enjoying international legitimacy through resolutions from the United Nations Security Council.

To provide a political cover for American decisions, Washington supported the creation of an Iraqi consultative authority, selected along ethnic and sectarian lines according to estimates made by the occupying authority regarding population ratios. Thus, in mid-July 2003, the formation of the Governing Council was announced, consisting of fifteen former opposition leaders, with a rotating monthly presidency among its members. However, the council's decisions were either voided by the cabinet or held under the official supervision of the American administration. This entire setup was an announcement of the institutionalization of sectarian and ethnic-based governance.

In addition to external factors playing a role in containing the sectarian dimensions of governance in Iraq, other factors can be identified, which manifest in three main directions. Trends and forces that led to sectarian conflict included various groups of Sunni Shiites competing with each other. The Supreme Council, for example, although it had a close connection with the Dawa Party on the political and ideological level, they competed to the end, and the Sadrist movement, which also has a connection to the Dawa Party, entered into a heated conflict.(Fodil El-Tohamy, website)

On the other hand, there was another competition between the Sunni Islamic Party and the Sunni Accord Front.

Forces opposing sectarianism were represented by various liberal, Marxist, and secular nationalist currents, which, through their intellectual openness, were able to confront the grip of sectarian culture. Despite the mechanisms in place to combat this scourge, a weakness in these resistant forces was observed after the American occupation. This weakness was exemplified by the transformation of the National Conference Liberal Movement, led by Ahmed Al-Haboubi, into a political movement called the Shiite House to ensure its participation in the 2005 elections. On the other hand, the Iraqi Communist Party followed a similar path after accepting political participation as a Shiite party in the Interim Governing Council.

The rise of sectarian forces in society, such as Shiite religious parties, coincided with the emergence of Sunni parties like the Islamic Party and the Muslim Scholars Association, which were able to regain their status as influential forces. Despite this, liberal, Marxist, and secular nationalist tendencies managed to achieve a degree of balance in sectarian conflict to some extent.

The ethnic-national dimension in the sectarian issue has taken the political conflict between various factions in Iraqi society to an ethnic-national level, especially after the Kirkuk issue emerged. This threatened to escalate the internal conflict into a regional one. Iran could potentially settle the conflict over the disputed territories between the central government and the Kurdistan Region in favour of its interests, without necessarily agreeing to Kurdish dominance over Kirkuk. Turkey, on the other hand, also allows the threat of Kurdish region to extend into Turkmen areas.

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that the sectarian issue in Iraq is primarily a political conflict driven by political forces using sectarian tools as a means to political mobilization and rallying followers along sectarian lines. Additionally, regional determinants play a significant role, as regional actors move based on their political and ideological interests, either by fuelling the conflict through political and military support or by intensifying it through alliances and achieving balance.

More than a decade has passed, and the political and security scene remains shrouded in much ambiguity and uncertainty. Security incidents have exacerbated the situation, leading to the unravelling of the state and societal bonds in Iraq, tearing apart its national fabric and pushing it toward sectarian entrenchment.

The issue of sectarianism has been prominently raised in the past decade in the Arab world and the Middle East, especially after the occupation of Iraq and the attempt to establish the new Iraqi state on ethnic and sectarian grounds. This plunged Iraq into a spiral of sectarian violence, which was enshrined in the permanent constitution of the state in 2005. Democracy was overshadowed by violence, sectarianism, and racial sectarianism, as its causes sacrificed what they had to entrench the idea of sectarianism and armed violence. This made civil war a possible option to return to, should necessity require.

So, the Iraqi landscape post the American occupation appears to be nothing but a depiction of the ruins of political, economic, and social life, all of which were ravaged by the machinery of foreign occupation and its inhumane practices imposed on the Iraqi people and their social fabric. The American occupation attempted to institutionalize the principles of sectarian and ethnic divisions for strategic reasons aimed at fracturing the Iraqi state and society.

After the occupation, the issues raised followed the same trajectory, as did all the measures in forming the post-occupation authority. The Transitional Governing Council was formed on ethnic and sectarian bases, with Shia representatives dominating the council's seats, accounting for over half, along with considerations for the Kurds as an ethnic group, despite them being Sunni. The same applied to the Interim Iraqi Government, which was formed on the same sectarian and ethnic bases. (Al-Bayan Magazine,p 145).

The current planning for the future of Iraq, both near and distant, is based on the same fundamental idea. Issues such as elections, geographic and administrative federalism within Iraq, as well as proposals in Western circles for dividing Iraq into three Shiite, Kurdish, and Sunni states, aim to change the identity of Iraq or the Iraqi society and the state controlled by Sunni Arabs. The emotions surrounding this vision have escalated to the point where the issue of Iraqi resistance from coalition forces or Shiite organizations, or the Kurdish ethnic state, is being addressed from a strategic or planning perspective. It is considered that the resistance is a reaction from Sunni Arabs, with the pretext of the Sunni Triangle, to attempts to marginalize or reduce the role of Sunnis in controlling the state, society, and indeed all Iraqi resources, regardless of their geographical concentration.

Regardless of the previous rule in Iraq, it was not representative of the Sunni population. On the contrary, Sunnis, in all their affiliations, were the primary targets and

victims of its establishment and practices. This phase represented a historical progression in the strategy of excluding Sunnis from governance in Iraq within the context of the idea of Arab nationalism promoted and driven by British colonialism. The state was built upon the ruins of the Islamic Caliphate within a historical context founded on an Arab basis and the framework of Arab nationalism in the nation. Therefore, it was nothing but a secular rule that reinforced the division of Sunnis into Arabs and Kurds, governing Iraq on tribal and clan-based principles. In its inception, it was closer to the Shiites than to any other faction.

After all this, with the American occupation of Iraq and the fall of Baghdad on April 9, 2003, followed by complete American control over Iraqi territory, questions naturally arise regarding the true motives behind the American war on Iraq. Were the justifications for war genuine or fabricated? Were they merely pretexts concealing other undisclosed objectives? And what are those undisclosed true objectives ?

Firstly, the American justifications for the aggression against Iraq and subsequent occupation revolved around the existence of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in Iraq, posing a threat to the American people and then to the neighboring populations of Iraq. However, it is evident that America has no direct concern for the neighboring populations, making such concerns appear disingenuous. As for the threat of these weapons to the American people, it was greatly exaggerated, as the transportation of such alleged weapons to the United States would require intercontinental ballistic missiles, long-range aircraft, or aircraft carriers in the Pacific or Atlantic oceans. It is evident that Iraq did not possess such missiles, aircraft, or carriers. The only remaining possibility would be the transfer of such weapons to terrorist organizations by Iraq. Hence, the American narrative directed towards the American people emphasized the alleged connections between the former Iraqi government and Al-Qaeda, relationships that were later proven to be unsubstantiated. This was widely recognized by all. (Mohammad Morou, p122-128)

After the American and British forces completed their control over Iraq and ensured the capture of all members of the former regime, including President Saddam Hussein, and after the decision of the permanent constitution of Iraq that endorsed federalism, and in order to avoid further armed operations led by Sunni groups against the occupying forces, the United States decided to withdraw from Iraq and hand over power to the Iraqis. This decision was made in accordance with an agreement between the United States and the Iraqi government, which began to align with American policies and no longer posed a threat to American national security in the region. The final military withdrawal from Iraq was announced by President Barack Obama on October 21, 2011, following an agreement with the Iraqi government based on the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) signed in 2008 between the Iraqi and American governments, which regulated the withdrawal and its completion by the end of 2011. The withdrawal of American forces from Iraq was recognition of the performance of the Iraqi security forces and their increased capabilities, as they assumed full responsibility for security duties. Based on the strong relationship between the two parties, they agreed on the following:

- The withdrawal of US forces from Iraqi territories shall not exceed December 31, 2011.
- Combat US forces shall withdraw from Iraqi cities, towns, and villages no later than the specified date, upon which Iraqi security forces will assume full responsibility. The withdrawal of US forces from the mentioned locations shall not exceed June 30, 2009. The Kurds welcomed the agreement as it was reached between the central government in Baghdad and the administration, with Masoud Barzani confirming the agreement that the Kurds themselves are allies of the United States. They agree to any steps taken by the US administration towards Iraq, as long as they do not affect their strategic interests.

Where the US forces undertake the task of mediating between the disputants, which the Kurds consider as support until they can fully assert their control over this important

economic region. Additionally, the Kurds focus their future interests on the presence of US bases in the Kurdistan region to ensure Kurdish security from Turkey, Iraq, or Iran. This concern is not exclusive to the Kurds alone, but also extends to the Americans to ensure their continued security in the region, aligning with the US strategy in the twenty-first century. (Mohammad Khaled Sarhan, Abu Al-Rish, 2011, p116-130)

This means that the potential future planning scenario for the United States after the end of 2011, despite the Kurds' welcoming of the withdrawal agreement, they aspired to American protection that would shield them from any potential threat from Baghdad, Iran, or Turkey. Additionally, they sought protection from Salafist jihadist movements, which began to view the Kurdistan Regional Government as a potential common enemy that must be fought.

Amidst the American media buzz surrounding the withdrawal of combat forces from Iraq and considering this withdrawal as the end of the American mission that began in mid-2003, examining the facts reveals that we are facing a new plan or a renewal of the occupation's image, status, and method of achieving its objectives. This is being covered by a new media plan different from the one that occurred under the guise of the Iraq occupation.

The media, either directly or through conveying officials' statements, has been focusing on issues related to the American withdrawal from Iraq, with important angles from within Iraq linked to the extent of the security apparatus and the Iraqi armed forces' ability to handle security matters after this withdrawal.

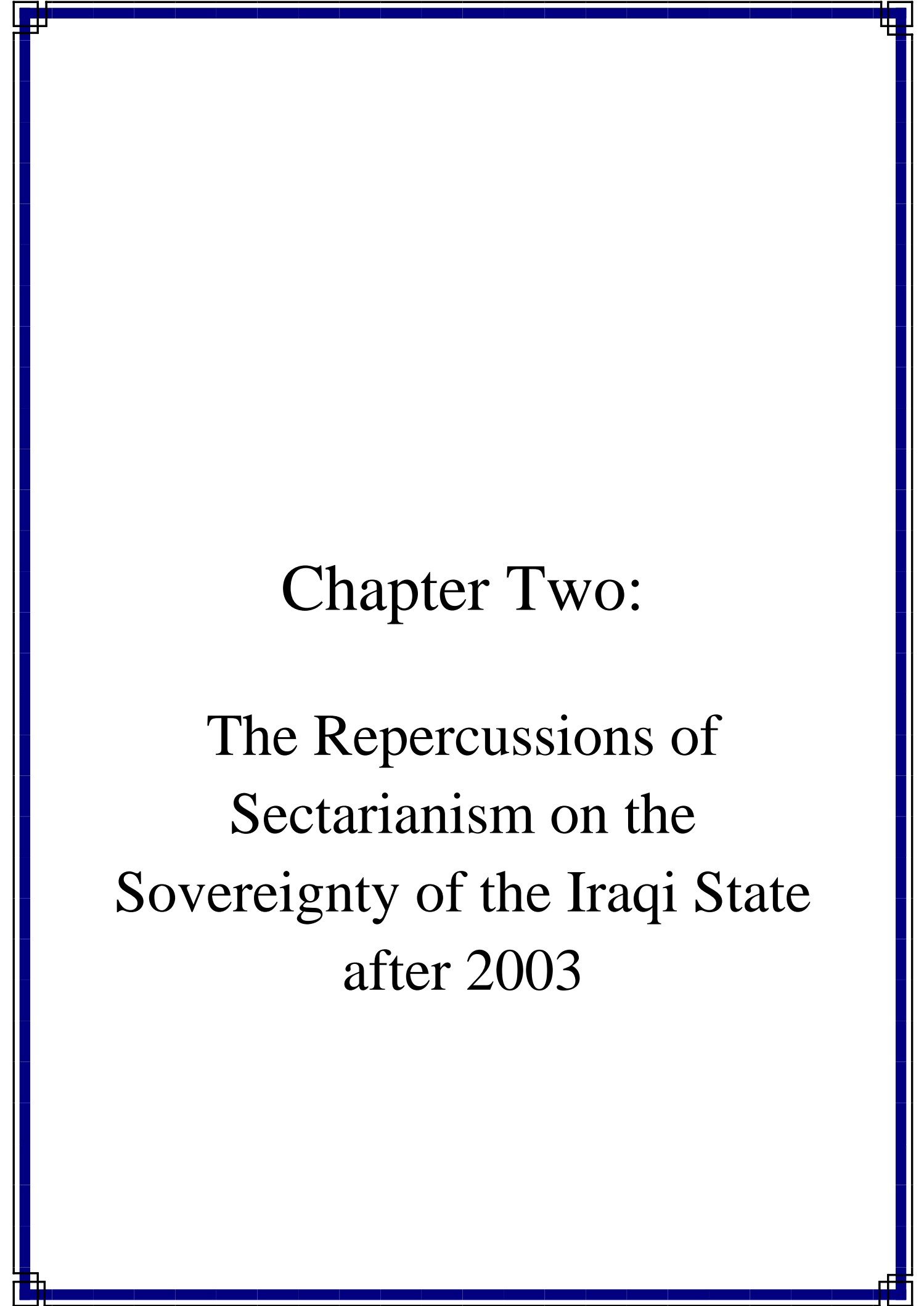
In the current stage of the United States' administration of the occupation of Iraq, it seeks to grasp all threads of the political, military, and popular movements in Iraq, to remain capable of confronting the challenge of maintaining its status as an occupying state. By constructing its largest embassy abroad, it seeks to perpetuate the state of conflict on the same basis. (Al-Bayan Magazine,p 1-9).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the situation in Iraq following the American occupation has been marked by complex political, social, and security challenges. The issue of sectarianism has been a central aspect of these challenges, with various political forces exploiting sectarian divisions for their own agendas. The American invasion and subsequent occupation exacerbated these divisions and contributed to the fragmentation of Iraqi society.

While the withdrawal of American forces was portrayed as the end of a mission, it also raised questions about the capacity of Iraqi security forces to maintain stability and handle security challenges independently. Additionally, the continued presence of American influence through diplomatic channels and the construction of a large embassy suggests that the dynamics of conflict and control persist even after the withdrawal of combat troops.

Overall, the situation in Iraq remains complex and volatile, with ongoing struggles for power, influence, and stability shaping the country's trajectory in the post-occupation era. Addressing sectarian tensions, building inclusive governance structures, and fostering national unity will be essential for Iraq to overcome its challenges and achieve lasting peace and prosperity.



Chapter Two:

The Repercussions of
Sectarianism on the
Sovereignty of the Iraqi State
after 2003

Introduction

The repercussions of sectarianism on the autonomy of the Iraqi state after 2003 have been profound and multifaceted. Sectarian divisions have weakened the central authority of the Iraqi government and undermined its ability to assert control over the entire territory of the country.

Overall, sectarianism has had far-reaching consequences for the sovereignty of the Iraqi state, undermining its authority, stability, and ability to govern effectively. Addressing sectarian divisions and promoting national reconciliation are essential steps toward restoring the sovereignty and unity of Iraq.

1. Stages of the Development of the Sectarian Conflict and the Sovereignty of the Iraqi state

The sectarian situation in Iraq witnessed significant development and escalation of confrontations between sectarian elements internally and externally, across two stages: the pre-American occupation stage and the post-occupation stage. This topic will be addressed through two demands, with each demand representing a stage.

1.1. The Pre-occupation Period.

According to (Pierre Salinger, Eric Laurent, 1993, p23), the stage before the American occupation is considered the initial phase of sectarian identity entanglement in Iraq, marked by wars and conflicts that the country witnessed, including:

1.1.1. The First Gulf War (Iran-Iraq War): (1988-1988)

The Iran-Iraq War is considered one of the longest military conflicts between two neighbouring Muslim countries in the 20th century. Before discussing the reasons for this war, it is important to address its initial nucleus, which originally emerged as a conflict

between the Arabs and Persians since 606 BCE. This conflict resurfaced in the 16th century between the Ottoman and Persian Empires due to unclear borders between their territories. Additionally, the sectarian issue between the two states was one of the main reasons for the war, as Iranians, predominantly Shia Muslims, clashed with Arabs, predominantly Sunni Muslims, during this period. (ibid)

The chaos of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 sought to threaten the smaller Gulf oil states and polarize groups loyal to it within Iraq, earning the regime the title of the "enemy." Some skirmishes occurred in September 1980, when Iraqi forces launched limited attacks on Iranian areas.

Conditions worsened in September 1980 when the Iraqi government, led by Saddam Hussein, announced the cancellation of the Algiers Agreement signed in 1975 between Iraq and Iran. This agreement stipulated Iraqi consent to joint sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab waterway in exchange for the Iranian Shah relinquishing his claims and, consequently, American support in northern Iraq.

On September 19, 1980, Saddam Hussein called for an emergency meeting in Baghdad with representatives of the Gulf states to discuss how to contain Ayatollah Khomeini and his anti-Saddam Islamic revolution in Iran. Saddam arrived at the meeting late and apologized, stating, "I will tell you what I want to do with Khomeini. We have decided to wage war on Iran." A Bahraini minister who attended the meeting recounted: "We told Saddam not to do it. They have 42 million people, and you have 14 million. You will occupy Iranian land and drown in it, and you will be subject to foreign countries that supply you with weapons." However, Saddam was determined to proceed with his decision, believing that Iraq would win the war within weeks and overthrow the Khomeini regime. (Pierre Salinger, Eric Laurent, 1993, p24)

The war began three days after the meeting when Iraqi forces invaded a 1,500-kilometer front against Iran. The Iraqis occupied an area of 700 square kilometers, aided by the excellent timing of the attack. Within two days, Iraq launched extensive raids inside Iran, targeting economic and military centers. Iran responded in kind, and the battles between the two countries continued for seven months, followed by an undeclared ceasefire. However, the fighting resumed fiercer than before, and the war continued for eight years.

After years of exhausting war, Iraq was ready to end it by any means and allied with Iran against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. However, Iran did not accept and Iraq announced its unilateral withdrawal from Iranian territories, urging Iran to stop fighting and join forces to confront the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. However, Iran did not withdraw, and the war continued for another six years.

In 1986, despite massive human losses, the Iranians broke through the Iraqi front and crossed the Shatt al-Arab, cutting off the international road between Basra and Faw. The Iraqi army began to heavily use artillery, firing 40,000 shells at Iranian positions inside Iraq without success, which alarmed the Iraqi central command and prompted them to contact military leaders in the front lines several times a day. The loss of Faw and the inability of the Iraqi army to push back the Iranians led the regime to commit further atrocities against military personnel. Several generals and officers in high positions were executed, including General Maher Abdul Rashid, the father-in-law of Saddam's youngest son.

Iraq was not as capable as Iran in handling the revolutionary wave that enjoyed immense popularity not only within Iran but also among the Iraqi Shiites, who constituted the majority of the population. This sentiment extended to Lebanon and Syria as well, and it garnered widespread Arab admiration in Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula. Until the year 1980, the Ba'athist regime in Iraq struggled to find a means to solidify its rule and legitimacy.

It resorted to repression: suppressing Kurds, Shiites, Communists, the middle class, and antagonizing Syria, which stood by Iran during the war.

Even within the Ba'ath Party in Iraq, there were opposing forces to the Saddamist core's desires, whether in its desire to reconcile with Syria and achieve unity or in opening up genuine dialogue with the Shiite and Islamic Iran. However, Saddam and his top officials decided not to cooperate with the new regime following the Shah's fall, instead opting to align with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.

The sectarian formations in both countries were deeply affected, leaving over a million casualties from Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds. The morale of the Iraqi people and the army was also impacted by the severity of the regime's actions against them, including punishment, execution, exclusion, and imprisonment. In 1981 alone, 60 Iraqi officers were executed without trial, and approximately 3000 Shiite and Kurdish civilian opponents were killed.

The war between two neighbouring Muslim states was not just a conflict between Sunnis and Shiites but brought together all Islamic opposites onto one battlefield. It perpetuated a sectarian rift that had been ongoing for 1300 years, rooted in the issue of Islamic caliphate and its branches. It was a conflict between a secular Ba'athist regime in Iraq and a theocratic system in Iran. It was a struggle between radicals in the Arab world, most of whom supported Tehran and moderates who backed Baghdad. It was a standoff between leaders determined to continue the war at any cost.

After more than thirty years since the end of the Iran-Iraq War, it is evident that this war was not merely driven by geopolitical objectives. Instead, it was propelled by ideological factors between the parties, represented by Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish elements. Consequently, it regressed towards sectarianism or sectarian motives.

1.1.2. The Second Gulf War (Invasion of Kuwait):

The contradiction in Gulf relations with Iraq began with the fall of the Hashemite monarchy in Baghdad in 1958 and the rise of General Abdul Karim Qasim to power, who openly demanded that Kuwait be part of the Iraqi state. The new republican regime in Iraq somewhat differed from the structure of the Gulf states, which were monarchies ruled by established families without any elected councils representing the people. This concerned the Gulf rulers, particularly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Riyadh, throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s, suspected that Baghdad supported political movements hostile to Saudi interests.

After the rise of Khomeini to power in Iran and his call for spreading the "Islamic Revolution" to the Arab neighbouring countries, the Gulf States felt a new Iranian threat against them. This was perceived through the presence of Shia communities in their countries, which could potentially serve as a political axis for Iran to achieve its ambitions in the region. This fear, coupled with erroneous calculations by the Iraqi leadership at the time, played a significant role in the Gulf States' alignment with Iraq in its military adventure against Iran. Iraq became the exclusive agent for Arab interests against Iran, receiving political and economic support. This support was based on the premise of keeping the flames of war away from the Gulf region by providing material and political assistance. However, this war, which drained Iraq's human and economic resources, did not result in victory but rather left Iraq exhausted. It also shed light on issues that were previously thought to be realities but were actually part of political and military adventurism inherent in the Ba'ath regime's structure. The Iraqis believed that Kuwait was exploiting their preoccupation with the war against Iran to siphon oil from shared fields, such as the Rumaila oil field. Additionally, Kuwait and the Emirates were accused of exceeding their oil production quotas

set by OPEC, which lowered oil prices and harmed Iraq. Saddam Hussein stated that the Iran-Iraq War, which lasted 8 years, was akin to defending the eastern gateway of the Arab homeland. He demanded that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia negotiate debt repayment or cancel all debts owed by Iraq. (Ahmed Ibrahim Mahmoud, 2003, p13)

Therefore, the mind-set of adventure and invasion represented by Saddam Hussein's regime at that time was deeply rooted in a consciousness associated with unrealistic and non-scientific awareness. The concept of the nation and its unity was never based on a political, economic, or social foundation as much as it was built on an "ideological" concept, specifically a "religious" one, and this is the form historically available. This mind-set and adventurous political calculations opened the gates of hell for Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait. The matter was not as simplified as portrayed by the media, meaning it was not just a border dispute between two sisterly states, but rather it represented an attempt by non-authentic nationalist forces to rise through military invasion and control, not through the development of economic and social structures and market unification. Therefore, the contradiction between the two structures (monarchy-republic) will remain within the framework of deep-rooted conflicts, while the emergence of a genuine development project is contingent upon the development of Arab societal classes. (ibid)

The Gulf States recognized the value of the war waged by Iraq against Iran. Consequently, Saudi and Kuwaiti relations with Iraq significantly improved to the extent that these two countries began to support Iraq financially and opened Gulf ports for Iraqi goods import and oil export. This support was perceived by the Gulf States as Iraq standing as a barrier against the export of the Khomeini revolution to the Arab region.

The sectarian divide and the official bias of the Iraqi state in its policies towards Sunni Muslims made it susceptible to considering Shia Muslims as a threat to its cohesion

and homogeneity, placing them as a fifth column during its war with Iran due to the success of Iranian forces in occupying part of Iraq during the Second Gulf War.

Sectarianism played a significant role in Iraq's conflict with Kuwait in the "Second Gulf War" due to its sectarian discriminatory policies. These policies created a sense of sympathy based on sectarianism from the neighbouring countries, followed by their rebellion during this war, which negatively affected Iraq's military operation towards Kuwait.

1.2. The Post-occupation Period.

Many tasks were assigned to the Kurdish side, represented by their armed forces, the Peshmerga, to assist US forces during the war on Iraq in March 2003. The American air force bombed Iraqi military sites and destroyed several important military facilities before the ground invasion towards Iraqi territories, which witnessed fierce battles, particularly in the south, including the city of Umm Qasr, which served as a gateway for the ground invasion of Iraq.

An agreement between the Kurdish and American forces was announced in Mosul, where Iraqi forces surrendered, handing over their weapons to the American-backed Kurdish forces. The American forces were keen to eliminate any Islamist presence, especially in the northern part of the country, where the majority are Kurds. They exploited the rift between Kurdish factions and the supporters of Islam group, which had a jihadist Salafi orientation and was supportive of Al-Qaeda. The Kurdish factions also took advantage of the region's turmoil and the American intervention to eliminate their adversaries from extremist groups.

The United States exploited sectarian tensions by leveraging the Kurds to marginalize other ethnic and religious groups perceived as obstacles to their goals and vision. They considered these groups as hindrances to their efforts to combat Islam within Iraq. Consequently, the US acquiesced to the demands of the Kurds and allied with them against

other social entities, enabling them to negotiate agreements and hold conferences with the occupier to advance their interests, namely the establishment of an independent Kurdish state.

The issue of the Sunni population became one of the primary concerns of the occupation of Iraq, which aimed at combating the presence of Islamic ideology, as they were considered enemies of America and therefore a threat to the spread of Islam. Consequently, the Council of Governance was established from fifteen opposition leaders to the regime.

The violence that erupted after the 2003 war in Iraq, escalating in the period 2006-2007, plunged the country into a civil war, further fragmenting the state. The violence led to sectarian divisions, and Nouri al-Maliki was elected as Prime Minister in 2006, but his leadership appeared weak, presiding over a divided government.

In 2008, Maliki formed the State of Law coalition, positioning himself as a broader Shia sectarian figure, achieving historical success in the provincial council elections.

The purpose of creating the State of Law coalition was to marginalize some sects in the state by deepening divisions between the Sunni and Shia communities through fair elections and preparatory operations for the upcoming 2010 elections, but it failed.

The sectarian situation in Iraq after the American occupation witnessed significant changes, with increasing tensions between sectarian identities. In this context, the United States began preparing for the invasion of Iraq, based on a strategic approach rooted in a set of principles aimed at destabilizing the state and Iraqi society to facilitate the occupation of Iraqi territories. This approach was launched by the US and British military machinery in 2003 and among these principles were strategic considerations:

- Devoting military oversight and intelligence to control Iraqi territories

- Internationalization of the crisis, which is originally the result of US policies and the war against humanity and weapons of mass destruction.
- Mobilizing American media and friendly countries to influence international public opinion.(Hassan Abdullah Ahmed Jawaher, 1998,p16)

It seems that the recognition of ethnic and cultural diversity in the Iraqi state has not led to the desired level of social cohesion between its components. The relationship between them is assumed to be a symbiotic one, rather than one of dominance or control.

This level of social and political awareness requires a foundation of real economic, social, cultural, and scientific development. By development, we mean the transformation of social structures in terms of their relationship to economic production.

This integrated process across all economic sectors should be unified by a legal framework that recognizes equal rights for all individuals. However, such a state of affairs does not exist in the structure of the Iraqi state, or in the structures of other Arab states. The pre-nationalistic, sectarian, religious, and ethnic-based power structures still dominate, inhibiting economic and cultural progress.

The current regime in Iraq, as a political equation, has effectively replaced one discriminatory system with another. The Shiite sectarianism has replaced Sunni sectarianism, while the Kurdish ethnic group remains a concern for the Iraqi government due to potential shifts in its allegiance.

Saddam Hussein's decision to wage war against Iran burdened Iraq economically and helped to unleash the Iranian tiger from its cage. It also cost the Gulf States, who supported Saddam, a great deal financially and politically, leading to tensions between Sunni and Shiite relations in the Gulf region. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait can be understood as a

continuation of Saddam Hussein's war with Iran, reflecting his mind-set towards neighbouring peoples and states.

The governments that ruled Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003 failed to grasp the importance of ethnic, religious, and sectarian diversity. Consequently, they adopted a system of sectarian and nationalist quota-sharing, which opened the door to corruption in the country. Despite the political convention of distributing the three top authorities among the prominent sects and ethnicities (Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish), the Shia have currently come to dominate all political and military institutions. This signifies a transition from one side of authoritarianism to another. This transition, along with the erosion of the Iraqi state's structure, has led to a situation where power has shifted, contributing to a state of ongoing authoritarianism.

The fall of the Ba'athist regime paved the way for numerous forces aspiring to power, serving as a pretext for economic plunder and political manipulation. Since 2003, Iraq has received over 800 billion dollars, yet around 312 billion dollars have been squandered due to corruption.

Based on the tangible reality of the situation, the negative role played by the American governor of Iraq, Paul Bremer, who assumed power in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, becomes evident. Bremer disbanded the Iraqi army and security forces affiliated with the previous regime. He issued laws that marginalized the Iraqi people, creating a security vacuum that led to the proliferation of weapons among the population and the emergence of armed sectarian groups. This American policy was not simply an error or misjudgement; rather, it aimed at undermining Iraqi national sovereignty under the Saddamist Ba'athist regime and deepening divisions among the people. This policy resulted in internal

divisions within Iraqi society that have not been resolved due to the absence of genuine national reconciliation, especially economically.

The collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime caused a deep rupture in the fabric of Iraqi society, pushing its components to seek internal stabilization through external alliances. The Shia sought to consolidate their position through their relationship with Iran, while the Kurds believed that the West would support their nationalist aspirations, and the Sunnis searched for a new regional reference. Consequently, as a result of this disruption in the state and society, Turkey felt the need to defend its interests in its neighbouring Iraq. These interests primarily include preventing the division of Iraq along sectarian or ethnic lines, which could lead to the emergence of a future Kurdish state, protecting the Turkmen minority, eliminating the Kurdistan Workers' Party, and preventing the emergence of a fundamentally undemocratic and neutral ethnic state. (Hassan Abdullah Ahmed Jawaher, 1998, p17)

In the face of the current political situation in Iraq, one cannot simply rely on the framework of the current political system, which operates according to the rule of "dominant and dominated," as if the dictatorial regime represented by the Ba'ath Party during its rule was dictatorial over one part of the country and not another. Dictatorship was a governing approach and style for the country, where everyone was subject to its laws. Similarly, what is happening now is the rule of sectarian dominance adopted by a Shi'ite sectarian party.

Therefore, there is still a long time ahead for Iraqis to build genuine democratic national forces that transcend the concept of pre-national structures such as sectarianism, tribalism, religion, and nationalism. The recent developments in Iraqi social and economic structures have not pushed towards breaking free from the pre-nationalistic patterns, so the burden will remain on the shoulders of Iraqis until a different time.

2. The Consolidation of Sectarianism and its Repercussions on the Sovereignty of Iraq after 2003.

The American occupation contributed to the collapse of the institutions of power and the state in Iraq, especially after the decision by US Ambassador Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, on May 23, 2003, to dissolve the Iraqi army and security institutions, leading to a comprehensive security and political vacuum. Some political parties and movements in Iraq seized this opportunity to fill the void by establishing militias and assuming security and military roles under the pretext of the absence of state institutions (police and army). Consequently, their role escalated to dominate and solidify narrow sectarian frameworks that overshadowed true national unity that should prevail in Iraq.

Paul Bremer established the Iraqi Governing Council in 2003, which primarily relied on sectarian quotas to crystallize various sectarian organizations. He then issued the State Administration Law, which entrenched the same sectarian approach found in the new Iraqi constitution that formed the basis for the current state institutions. This indirectly legitimized the consolidation and development of militias in Iraq.

In response to the requirements of this study, it is divided into two main aspects:

1. The first aspect delves into analyzing the reality of sectarianism in the restructuring of the system, which was renewed by Nouri al-Maliki with support from Bremer, and its impact on the sovereignty of the Iraqi state.
2. The second aspect addresses the repercussions of sectarianism, manifested in tribal and sectarian conflicts, on the sovereignty of the Iraqi state.

1.1. The Sectarian Factor and the Restructuring of the Political System in Iraq after 2003.

During the two years following the American invasion, Iraq witnessed several political milestones that marked a new reality in a country that had experienced centralized and authoritarian rule for several decades. Additionally, sectarian conditions in Iraq underwent significant changes during this period, with increased tensions and power struggles among sectarian identities across various regions.

The post-American invasion scene in Iraq portrays nothing but the ruins of political, economic, and social life destroyed by the foreign occupation apparatus and its inhumane practices imposed on the Iraqi people and their social fabric. The occupation sought to institutionalize the principle of political and ethnic sectarianism, aiming to fragment the state and the Iraqi society as a strategic goal.

The sectarian factor in Iraq had a profound impact on rebuilding the state and reclaiming its lost sovereignty through several phases, during which Iraqi society witnessed various competitive dynamics among its sectarian and ethnic political factions, almost leading Iraq as a unified state to fragment into several small entities. This competition was particularly evident between Sunnis and Shiites, manifested in three main directions:

- Forces and factions that exacerbated sectarian tensions included various groups from both Sunni and Shiite communities vying for power. For example, while the Supreme Council, despite its close ties to the Islamic Dawa Party on both political and ideological levels, competed fiercely. Similarly, the Sadrist movement, which also has connections to the Dawa Party, engaged in intense competition. On the other hand, there was another competition between the Sunni Islamic Party and the Sunni Accord Front.

- Opposing forces to sectarianism in Iraq included various liberal, Marxist, and secular nationalist tendencies, which, due to their intellectual openness, were able to confront the sectarian cultural heritage. Despite the mechanisms to combat this phenomenon, the resilience of these opposition forces was observed to weaken after the American occupation. They were marginalized, and a political participation map was drawn for them. For instance, the National Congress Party, led by Ahmed al-Haboubi, transformed into a political movement called the Shiite House to ensure its participation in the 2005 elections. Similarly, the Iraqi Communist Party followed suit after accepting political participation as a Shiite party in the interim governing council.

- On the other hand, there were forces that activated sectarianism socially, represented by Shiite religious parties. Additionally, Sunni factions such as the Islamic Party and the Muslim Scholars Association emerged, regaining their status as influential forces. They managed to achieve a kind of sectarian power balance to some extent.

A. The stage of forming the interim coalition authority: The appointment of Jay Garner as the former civil administrator of Iraq was the first step taken by Washington to initiate the process of restructuring the country after entering Baghdad. However, Garner was replaced after about one month by former diplomat Paul Bremer. Bremer relied on his authority under Order 1483 and the broad powers granted to him by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).

"Bremer" has taken numerous political and economic decisions, many of which have had a radical nature. Among them was the dissolution of the Iraqi army, but his decisions remained without political or legal cover. Although they had international legal legitimacy through the decisions of the Security Council, there was a need to establish a local administrative structure to provide political cover for American policies. Therefore,

Washington supported the establishment of a provisional Iraqi authority based on ethnic and sectarian power-sharing arrangements derived from occupation authority population ratios.

In mid-July 2003, the Governing Council was announced, consisting of fifteen former opposition leaders, operating under a monthly rotating presidency among its members. Later, it branched into a council of ministers, both of which remained under the official supervision of the American governor.

Regardless of its limited powers, the Governing Council was the beginning of a new political form in Iraq. Through it, Iraqis became acquainted with new politicians who had spent long years in exile outside Iraq. Furthermore, through the sectarian distribution of its members, efforts were made to entrench the ethnic and sectarian politics that had been informally practiced previously, even though they were officially and socially unacceptable.

B. The stage of drafting the temporary constitution: In the autumn of 2003, the United Nations Security Council issued Resolution 1511, which affirmed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. It acknowledged that the Governing Council represented Iraqi sovereignty but stopped short of granting it supreme legal authority over the country. The resolution initiated the transfer of power from the Coalition Authority, representing the occupying forces, to an Iraqi authority composed of a transitional National Council and government by no later than June 30, 2004.

During its brief tenure of less than a year, the Governing Council operated under the legal cover of Resolutions 1483 and 1511, which granted the occupying authority the power to administer the country. Before transitioning to the transfer of power, it was necessary to issue a constitution to serve as the legal framework for the anticipated government, replacing the previous constitution. Thus, in March 2004, the Governing Council issued a temporary constitution called the State Law for the Transitional Period, which defined the legal framework for the transitional government until elections could be held and a permanent

constitution drafted and subjected to a referendum in August 2005, preceding new general elections by the end of that year.

The issuance of this law and its subsequent amendment two months later was a significant political step for the Governing Council, as it largely determined the course of future political processes and established foundations that were difficult to change for the new Iraq as it came to be described.

C. Phase of establishing the interim government: The subsequent step was the formation of the Transitional National Council, which would serve as the state's parliament. One hundred individuals were selected to be members of the council through an election process using electoral colleges in the various provinces of Iraq. Many objected to this method, arguing that it did not yield genuine representatives of the Iraqi people but rather brought back the same forces that participated in the Governing Council while marginalizing others. However, other groups argued that the Electoral College method was the best option given the circumstances at that time, and it was better than nothing was, especially considering that this council was temporary, and its tenure would not exceed seven months until the general elections in Iraq at the end of January 2005.

The debate did not stop at the method of selecting members of the National Council but also extended to the selection of the head of state and the prime minister. An open dispute arose within the Governing Council between two candidates for the presidency: Adnan al-Padja dji and Ghazi Ajil al-Yawer. Eventually, al-Yawer won the position. Meanwhile, Washington chose Iyad Allawi for the position of prime minister without any apparent competitor, especially after what was described as severe criticism from the Bush administration towards Ahmed Chalabi, who was considered one of America's closest allies in Baghdad, due to allegations that he provided false advice and information to Washington to push forward with the war against Saddam Hussein's regime.

D. Stage of holding general elections: Al-Yawer and Allawi officially assumed power on the 28th of July, 2004, taking over from Ambassador Bremer, who left Iraq on the same day, returning to his country. Al-Yawer began his duties on the second day, forming a government whose portfolios were distributed in a similar manner to the Governing Council, based on sectarian and ethnic principles. Meanwhile, the largest American embassy in the world, supported by around 140,000 American soldiers and thousands of troops from other countries, took over the previous tasks of Bremer since that date, evolving their description to become multinational forces.

Despite its short duration, Alawi's tenure witnessed many events, including a worsening security situation and intense debate surrounding the general elections. There was both opposition to holding elections under occupation and demands for holding them on schedule, while a third party sought to postpone them. However, the Alawi government made progress in regional and international relations, which had a positive impact on the economic side, with the beginning of debt cancellation and reduction of Iraq's massive debts. During the same period, there was a race among parties and political forces in preparation for the elections, which indeed took place on January 30, 2005. The interim government achieved success in these elections, resulting in a new political landscape, with dominance centered on the National Assembly by a limited number of forces, while other forces faded, and a third boycotted, despite having significant popular influence, remaining outside the parliament.

1.2. Repercussions of Sectarianism on the Sovereignty of the State of Iraq after 2003

The sectarianism that Iraq has suffered from throughout its various phases constitutes an ongoing crisis with diverse ramifications that affect all aspects of the state, including the political, economic, and social spheres.

1.2.1. Political repercussions:

Sectarianism in Iraq reflects on a crucial political aspect, namely the state's political system, through:

- **Transformation of sectarianism from discrimination to politicization:** The danger of this phenomenon lies in its politicization. Discrimination based on sectarianism can potentially be ended by altering the nature of power. However, politicizing sectarianism leads to the division of society and the state. In Iraq, sectarianism started as racial discrimination that did not necessarily lead to societal or national division. However, as sectarianism became associated with political power and governance, it significantly exacerbated existing divisions. This politicization has led to demands for separatism, such as the establishment of an independent Kurdish state separate from Iraq. Similarly, both Shiite and Sunni communities have their own demands, seeking to achieve their objectives through these demands. Therefore, the issue is highly sensitive and critical in the political sphere.
- **Political corruption** is a product of the sectarian quota system in Iraq. This system failed to present a positive image of the consociational democracy required by transitional circumstances, instead becoming a mechanism for power-sharing and a revolution among influential political elites. Moreover, financial corruption spread throughout all state institutions. Elections became a game of dividing spoils among ruling political elites rather than a competition between political forces. This system also evolved to distribute state positions on a sectarian or ethnic basis, such as the presidency for Kurds, the prime ministership for Shiites, and the parliamentary presidency for Sunnis, making these positions entitlements that cannot be relinquished despite the presence of a constitution.

The sectarian issue deepened the phenomenon of political corruption in the Iraqi system and deprived it of its legitimacy. There is no peaceful transition of power, resulting in

a sectarian quota policy adopted by the majority of officials and scholars. Although this policy was supposedly produced by the American occupation authorities, it was, in fact, created by state authorities. Relying on this sectarian system exacerbates sectarian tensions, preventing sects from coalescing and forming a unified entity under one ruler, irrespective of sect, ethnicity, or religion. Consequently, this system is unjust for the Iraqi people. The absence of accountability and transparency in various operations, including elections, due to the weakness of oversight by the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, exacerbates the situation.

- **Weak state sovereignty** manifests in the role of external actors such as Iran, Gulf states, Turkey, and the United States, which exert pressure to maintain the state of instability in Iraq. Sectarian tensions are one of the main tools that contribute to creating tensions between the components of Iraqi society. Iran seeks to strengthen its political influence with Shiite factions in Iraq to counterbalance Arab Gulf states and the United States. This goal is shared by neighbouring countries like Turkey and the Gulf states. The United States, being responsible for the establishment of sectarian politics in Iraq, aims to impose its interests in Iraq and the region as a whole by promoting sectarianism.

The effective influence of the United States significantly undermines the sovereignty of the Iraqi state through external and regional interventions, rendering it unable to contain internal affairs. Consequently, this leads to the empowerment of these sectarian factions.

- **The emergence of terrorist groups and organizations** is another consequence of sectarianism, particularly on the political front. An example of this is the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which recruited individuals from various nationalities to fight in Syria and Iraq. ISIS seized control of Mosul, the second-largest city in Iraq by population, on June 11, 2014. They engaged in assassinations, kidnappings, and destruction.

The manifestations resulting from sectarianism on the political side have hindered the state-building process in Iraq. Coupled with foreign interventions, the state has lost some of its sovereignty. Moreover, the state's reliance on a quota system to achieve stability, security, and justice has not been successful. Instead, it has exacerbated the situation, leading to the infringement of individual rights and freedoms, increased corruption, and polarization between factions and elites, as seen in the 2010 elections. This has contributed to the spread of violence and insurgency, with terrorism becoming closely linked to sectarianism within the Iraqi state.

1.2.2. Economic repercussions:

The reflections on the economic side manifested in financial and administrative corruption. Due to the current situation in Iraq, particularly among higher authorities, their main concern has shifted towards exploiting their positions for personal gain. This includes collecting high salaries, traveling abroad, benefiting from procurement contracts, and colluding with foreign companies. Positions have become targets for individuals to amass wealth and smuggle it abroad, engaging in corrupt practices and money laundering in neighbouring countries, as observed today.

The sectarian conditions that have disrupted the political landscape in Iraq have also impacted the economic situation. Financial and administrative corruption has become rampant, exacerbated by the lack of societal involvement in nation-building through political participation. Instead, there is a greater focus on nurturing division, sectarian violence, and discrimination. Corruption has emerged as one of the most significant threats to the Iraqi economy, with oil becoming a commodity for competition among sectarian factions and foreign entities.

Furthermore, the disagreement among Iraqi sects over the form of political governance has also led to economic disunity regarding economic management. The sectarian divide has worsened to the extent that sects internally engage with external actors such as Iran, Turkey, and the United States, each with different interests in Iraq.

1.2.3. Social repercussions:

The deteriorating political and economic conditions have had a negative impact on the social fabric of the Iraqi state, most notably leading to a fundamental change in its structure. The worsening conditions have varied among different segments of society, as the political and economic turmoil experienced by Iraqi citizens over decades, amidst wars, sanctions, and American occupation, has led to preoccupation with the concerns of life. They became captives of sectarian cultural molds imposed by political parties, religious movements, and nationalist factions, exacerbating cultural regression and weakening societal awareness. This situation made them susceptible to being influenced by sectarian leaderships that emerged during this period.

The change in the social structure has led to a shift in the demographic composition of many cities and regions across Iraq, resulting in the disappearance of areas characterized by mixed and shared populations, especially between Sunnis and Shiites. This has significantly contributed to the lack of cultural awareness among Iraqi individuals and strengthened sectarian tendencies, where neither party accepts the other in their social lives, leading to distance and alienation based on religious beliefs and doctrines entrenched by religious leaders and movements in the country.

The transformation in the social system has fuelled sectarian violence, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths, injuries, and disabilities among various components of Iraqi society. The causes of this situation have been diverse, including mass killings, civil wars,

and various forms of armed conflict. Additionally, it has led to forced displacement and the migration of between 2 to 4.5 million citizens both internally and externally, in addition to the emigration of skilled individuals and educated elites who have been targeted by sectarian violence. (Hassan Abdullah Ahmed Jawaher, 1998, p38)

Conclusion

The political emergence of sectarian movements in the Arab world serves as a tool of pressure on political systems. The response of these systems to sectarian demands at the expense of others amplifies the latter's insistence on raising the ceiling of their demands, bolstered by the credibility and legitimacy of their claims. This increased confidence leads to heightened competition for power, resulting in a fissure between the political system and the sectarian groups. Consequently, these sects, feeling marginalized, may resort to demanding secession and the formation of independent states as a means of self-determination.

In Iraq, the competition between the Shiite majority and the Sunni minority has been the axis of political rivalry in the country since the fall of President Saddam Hussein in 2003. The sectarian tensions have hindered state-building efforts and destabilized the country. However, the Iraqi government has not made any clear attempts to overcome these divisions and build a common national identity. Instead, many of the measures taken thus far have only led to further fragmentation of the state, exacerbated by external interventions threatening national sovereignty, security, and political and social stability, such as the presence of Al-Qaeda, a product of the civil war, and ISIS.

General Conclusion

Sectarianism is considered a characteristic that distinguishes many societies, especially Arab societies, regardless of their time and place. This is attributed to several factors and causes inherent in the nature of human life, such as the phenomenon of migration and movement in search of livelihood and a better life. The diversity of sects in Iraq is a result of these factors.

In conclusion, this study has shown that sectarianism in Iraq is one of the most significant threats to the sovereignty, security, and stability of the state. Sovereignty in a multi-sectarian state like Iraq cannot be achieved without addressing fundamental requirements such as political and social justice, transparency, and fair wealth distribution, even in homogeneous societies. Until today, Iraq continues to suffer from sectarian influences, whether political or social, due to internal and external factors that have significantly impacted the course of national sovereignty, given ethnic and sectarian diversity.

The application of the power-sharing formula on sectarian grounds, proposed as a political solution in the 2010 elections, is not the most effective solution to achieve the unified national sovereignty among the components of the Iraqi society. What the power-sharing formula has achieved could only be realized through the comprehensive implementation of a democratic system in all its aspects, regardless of the political quota system adopted in the country's governance.

To sum up, based on the political realities on the ground, the study expects that the issue of sectarianism in Iraq will continue to assert itself and negatively impact the establishment of an independent, sovereign, and national state unless the concept of sectarian identity is refuted and replaced with the idea of national and Arab national identity.

The previously raised issue can be addressed through the following points:

- Sectarian power struggles in Iraq have hindered the advancement of the Iraqi state and the achievement of political, economic, and social security.
- Due to sectarian affiliations, racial discrimination, especially between Sunnis and Shiites, is prevalent, with each group claiming entitlement to power in Iraq.
- Sectarianism affects the sovereignty of the Iraqi state in the political system by perpetuating inequality among sects.
- The association of sectarianism with religious and ideological aspects has significantly impacted security, political stability, economic prosperity, and social cohesion within the Iraqi state. Perhaps the separation of religion from the state could be the appropriate and most effective solution.

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الملخص:

تناولت الدراسة موضوع تأثير الطائفية على سيادة الدولة العراقية المعاصرة، من خلال التطرق لمختلف الاتجاهات المتباينة في النظر لمفهوم الطائفية، وكذا أهم المفاهيم المشابهة لمفهوم الطائفية، بحيث تم التركيز على أهم العوامل الطائفية والتي تعددت أسبابها كعامل الصراع الطائفي على السلطة في الدولة، وكان الدور الخارجي أو الدولي للاحتلال الأمريكي في عام 2003 مستغلا أوضاع التفرقة الطائفية في تحقيق مصالحه الخاصة. فلقد شهدت الدولة العراقية تأزم الأوضاع بين مختلف طوائفها وذلك ابتداء من 2003 إلى غاية 2012، وهذا لا ينفي وجود بعضها قبل هذه الفترة، مما أدى إلى زعزعة الاستقرار واعاقة بناء الدولة بعد انهيارها سياسيا واقتصاديا واجتماعيا، فاعتمدها على نظام المحاصصة الطائفية لم يحقق أي نوع من الديمقراطية بالعكس أدى إلى الفساد وانتشار البيروقراطية فقيام الدولة على أسس مذهبية قومية عقد مسألة السيادة الوطنية في المستقبل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الطائفية – السيادة الوطنية – الصراع الطائفي – الدولة العراقية – السلطة